

SCHOOL MATTERS

Mural tells school's story

A colorful new mural that tells the story of Juana Briones Elementary School is now lighting up the school campus. Created just in time for graduation last spring, the mural features past and current images Juana Briones School.

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The mural was the brainchild of second grade teacher Pamela Dappen. She was inspired by evidence of the wonderful richness of their school community, especially, the wealth of talented and experienced staff.

Dappen thought the mural could provide a visual glimpse into the elements of her community that she considered special. Her idea was propelled by a generous grant funded by Palo Alto Fund for Education, and the availability of a Spectra artist from Santa Cruz County.

The artist, **Yermo Aranda**, is a muralist who has worked with students, schools and families for more than 30 years.

Last spring, Yermo Aranda came to talk with the students about what they thought was important to show the community about "who we are." From these ideas generated by students and staff, the artist created a draft of the mural.

Yermo then came every week to draw and paint, working with groups of two to six students. After five weeks Yermo had worked with every student in Briones school, encouraging each to have a hand in creating the mural.

Kids were anxious to point out which mural section they painted. The project also helped students visualize what they consider important about their school. They wrote letters, did sketches and studied drawing and painting techniques. The calming, patient and knowledgeable energy of the artist seemed to bring out the best in each child.

One section of the mural tells of the woman after whom their school was named. Another represents the flora and fauna of the bay lands and their place on the peninsula. In the center is a group of learners as imagined by children sitting atop an

eagle. Jack Younkin, Briones custodian for the last 24 years, believes the students will remember the mural for years to come. "They will come back to this school and say, 'I did this part, I did that part!'"

Menlo students honored

Twelve members of Menlo School's Class of 2004 have been named Merit Semifinalists by the National Merit Scholarship Program. These students will continue in the competition for some 8,000 Merit Scholarship awards, worth \$32 million, that will be announced beginning in April 2004.

Menlo School's semifinalists are: **Hillel Bocian** and **Nathan Wilcox-Fogel** of Los Altos; **Stephen Chait** and **Andrew Farmer** of Menlo Park; **Ethan Dreyfuss** of Boulder Creek; **Katherine Hagey** of Burlingame; **Patricia Ho** of Redwood City; **Nicholas Joy**, **Andrew Kittler** and **Keerthi Malladi** of Atherton; **Bennet Meyers** of San Jose; and **Carla Pugliese** of Mountain View.

High school juniors all across the country entered the National Merit Program by taking the 2002 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. Fewer than one percent of the nation's high school seniors were designated Semifinalists on a state representational basis.

Semifinalists now must fulfill several requirements and advance to Finalist standing, a prerequisite to being considered for one of three types of Merit Scholarship awards. Every Finalist will compete for one of 2,500 National Merit \$2500 Scholarships; some 300 corporations and business organizations will underwrite about 1,100 corporate-sponsored scholarships; and about 200 colleges and universities are expected to finance some 4,400 college-sponsored Merit Scholarship awards for Finalists who will attend the sponsoring institution.

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